

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

**FINANCE, REGENERATION AND PROPERTY SCRUTINY SELECT
COMMITTEE**

MINUTES

Tuesday, 14th March, 2023

Present: Cllr R I B Cannon (Chair), Cllr F G Tombolis (Vice-Chair), Cllr P Boxall, Cllr T Bishop, Cllr C Brown, Cllr M O Davis, Cllr D Harman, Cllr M A J Hood, Cllr D Lettington, Cllr B J Luker, Cllr H S Rogers and Cllr C J Williams. Cllr R W Dalton, Cllr J R S Lark and Cllr D Thornevell were present as substitute members.

In attendance: Councillors M A Coffin and P M Hickmott were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No. 15.21.

Virtual: Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, Mr S Bell, R P Betts, M D Boughton, V M C Branson, D Keers, Mrs A S Oakley, W E Palmer, M R Rhodes, K B Tanner and Mrs M Tatton participated via MS Teams and joined the discussion when invited to do so by the Chairman in accordance with Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M C Base, Mrs T Dean and N J Heslop.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

FRP 23/1 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Notification of substitute members were recorded as set out below:

- Cllr Dalton substituting for Cllr Base
- Cllr Lark substituting for Cllr Heslop
- Cllr Thornevell substituting for Cllr Dean

In accordance with Council Procedure Rules 17.5 to 17.9 these Councillors had the same rights as the ordinary member of the committee for whom they were substituting.

FRP 23/2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

FRP 23/3 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Finance, Regeneration and Property Scrutiny Select Committee held on 15 November 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

FRP 23/4 TMBC OWNED SITES - LOCAL PLAN

In preparing the Local Plan, the Council, acting as the Local Planning Authority, would be writing to all landowners whose sites were identified in the Urban Capacity Study (UCS) to seek additional information about those sites, which would include the Council itself as landowner.

The joint report of the Leader, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation and Property and the Director of Central Services & Deputy Chief Executive sought Members' views on the list of Council owned sites, as set out in Annex A, which were suggested to be unavailable for development through the initial information gathering process.

Members had regard to the sites identified to be inappropriate for development at this stage, the legal implications and the financial and value for money considerations detailed in the report and sought clarity around the remaining Council owned sites as identified by the Urban Capacity Study. In response, Members were advised that once the analysis of the remaining sites had been completed, a further report would be presented to the Committee for consideration.

RECOMMENDED: That all sites set out at Annex A to the report, be considered as unavailable for development when formally responding to the letter from the Local Planning Authority, once received, regarding TMBC owned sites identified in the Urban Capacity Study.

*** Referred to Cabinet**

FRP 23/5 REVENUES LOCAL SCHEME DECISIONS

The report gave details of two new discretionary rate relief schemes and a new council tax support fund policy for 2023/24.

It was noted that in respect of the two discretionary rate relief schemes, the Government expected billing authorities to apply and grant relief to qualifying ratepayers from the start of the 2023/24 billing year, and with regard to the council tax support fund policy, the Government expected billing authorities to apply the reductions to the 2023/24 council tax bills.

Therefore, both the aforementioned schemes and the policy had been applied in accordance with the Government's expectations.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) a scheme for the 2023/24 Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Rates Relief, as set out in Annex 1, be retrospectively adopted;
- (2) a scheme for the 2023 Supporting Small Business Relief, as set out in Annex 2, be retrospectively adopted;
- (3) a policy for the 2023/24 Council Tax Support Fund, as set out in Annex 3, be retrospectively adopted;
- (4) delegated authority be granted to the Revenues Manager to award, revise or revoke business rates reliefs in accordance with the adopted schemes subject to any disputed entitlement to relief being referred to the Director of Finance & Transformation; and
- (5) delegated authority be granted to the Director of Finance & Transformation to make technical amendments to the Council Tax Support Fund as per para 10.1 of the policy set out in Annex 3.

***Decision Taken by Cabinet Member**

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

FRP 23/6 REVENUES AND BENEFITS PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

Members noted the recent developments in respect of council tax, business rates, council tax reduction and housing benefits as detailed in the report of the Director of Finance and Transformation.

Collection rates for council tax and business rates were currently above target. Despite expectations that the situation with rising energy payments and the general cost of living would have a detrimental impact on collection, the collection rates were ahead of the amount collected in the same period the previous year.

FRP 23/7 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Members received a list of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that were relevant to the committee. A baseline covering April to June 2022 had been used, with the data for October to December 2022 representing the most up-to-date available statistics. The KPIs would be monitored on a quarterly-annual basis and would be made available on an ongoing basis.

Members were requested to submit any questions regarding the KPIs to the relevant Director/Chief Executive at least two days in advance of the meeting in order to ensure that a suitable response could be provided at the meeting.

FRP 23/8 WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23

The Work Programme setting out matters to be scrutinised during 2022/23 was attached for information. Members were invited to suggest future matters by liaising with the Chair of the Committee.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

FRP 23/9 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 7.55 pm